

Classification of Food Items for School Lunch

Guidelines on Use

Catering committees or teachers responsible for students' catering are advised to make reference to the following steps to preview the monthly menus from lunch suppliers and discuss with the lunch suppliers for menu improvement so that students can enjoy healthier lunches.

Steps:

I. Remove 'Strongly Discouraged Food Items'

Exclude all 'Strongly Discouraged Food Items' from the menu to ensure ALL meal choices do not serve these food items. For details of the classification, please refer to pages 39-41 of *Nutritional Guidelines on Lunch for Students*.

'Strongly Discouraged Food Items' that are easily overlooked include:

- Sauce or gravy (e.g. curry sauce or Portuguese style sauce made with coconut cream or coconut milk, white sauce made with cream)
- Food items that have been deep-fried in the production process (e.g. fried fish curd, E-fu noodles and fried bean curd stick)
- Food items with trans fat (e.g. pastry)

II. Pay attention to the frequency of 'Limited Food Items' served in a week

Identify 'Limited Food Items' and make sure that these food items are served on not more than two school days in a week. For details of the classification, please refer to pages 37-38 of *Nutritional Guidelines on Lunch for Students*.

III. Verify the frequency of 'Encouraged Food Items' served

Depending on the serving of grains by lunch suppliers,

- **if more than one type of grains is served each day**, 'Encouraged Food Items' should be provided in at least one meal choice on all school days;
- or
- **if only one type of grains is served each day**, 'Encouraged Food Items' should be provided on at least two school days in a week.

For details of the classification, please refer to page 35 of *Nutritional Guidelines on Lunch for Students*.

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Revised in 2025

Category	Criterion	Examples
‘Encouraged Food Items’¹ ➤ If more than 1 type of grains is served each day, these food items should be provided in <u>at least 1 meal choice on all school days</u> ; or ➤ If only 1 type of grains is served each day, these food items should be provided on <u>at least 2 school days in a week (with 4 or 5 school days)</u> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grains should contain at least 10% of whole grains or added vegetables, excluding potatoes, sweet potatoes, nuts and seeds (e.g. flaxseed and sesame) 	Red rice, brown rice, rice added with leafy vegetables/corn kernel/mushroom/carrot/pumpkin/barley, wholemeal bread, buckwheat noodle (soba), spinach noodle, tri-colour fusilli, quinoa
‘Limited Food Items’ ➤ These food items should not be served on <u>more than 2 school days in a week with 4 or 5 school days</u> ; or ➤ These food items should <u>not be served on more than 1 school day in a week with only 2 or 3 school days</u> ; or ➤ These food items <u>should not be served in a week with only 1 school day</u> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grains with added fat or oil 	Fried rice ² , fried noodles ² , ‘yau mian’ (noodle), pizza (without using ‘Strongly Discouraged Food Items’ as ingredients)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fatty cuts of meat and poultry with skin 	Beef brisket, beef rib, spare rib, pork jowl, pork cartilage, chicken, duck and goose with skin (e.g. chicken wing, chicken thigh, drumstick, except chicken feet ³)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full-fat dairy products 	Full-fat milk, full-fat cheese, full-fat yoghurt, evaporated milk (including reduced-fat evaporated milk)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processed or preserved meat, egg and vegetable products 	Egg bean curd, barbecued pork, bacon, smoked duck breast, ham, sausage, luncheon meat, beef ball, white fish ball, mushroom and pork ball, preserved mustard green, pickled cucumber, fermented black soybean, seasoned vegetarian meat, crab stick, soybean curd slab cooked with spices, ready-to-eat dim sum (e.g. siu mai, bun with meat and vegetables, steamed beef ball, steamed dumpling in Chiuchow style), canned tuna in oil, canned soup, chikuwa, marinated egg, ready-made burger patty, salt baked chicken
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sauce or gravy with high fat, salt or sugar content⁴ 	Sauce or gravy: fermented black bean sauce, teriyaki sauce, Swiss sauce, ketchup, white sauce or carbonara sauce (made with full-fat milk or evaporated milk), Portuguese style sauce or curry sauce (made with full-fat milk or evaporated milk), Chinese marinade, red fermented soybean curd, fermented soybean curd, miso sauce, belachan, shrimp paste, chu hou sauce, soy sauce, preserved plum, miso, chili bean sauce, barbecued sauce, satay, sa cha sauce, sweet and sour sauce, zhajiang sauce
‘Strongly Discouraged Food Items’ ➤ Should not to be provided in <u>ALL</u> meal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deep-fried food items 	Deep-fried pork chop, French fries, deep-fried chicken thigh, spring roll, samosa, fried bean curd puff, fried fish ball, fried gluten, fried bean curd stick, fried fish fillet, fried fish curd, fried peanuts, E-fu noodles, food items containing fried fritter (e.g. glutinous rice roll with fried fritter), fried bean curd, deep-fried chicken feet ³
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food items with animal fat or plant sources of saturated fat 	Fat/oil: butter (including reduced-fat butter), lard, cream (including reduced-fat cream), palm oil, coconut oil Food items: pineapple bun (with butter), pineapple bun, cocktail bun or loaf (bun with a filling made with sugar and shredded coconut), egg tart (short crust), egg tart, cookie, egg roll, sandwich biscuit, croissant, butter roll (with added butter), other food items made with coconut cream or coconut milk, scone, muffin Gravy: white sauce or carbonara sauce (made with cream), and Portuguese style sauce, curry sauce or satay sauce (made with coconut cream or coconut milk)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food items with trans fat 	Food items added with the following oils: hydrogenated vegetable oil, margarine and shortening with trans fat
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food items with very high salt content 	Salted fish, salted egg, Chinese preserved sausage, Chinese preserved meat, food items containing Chinese preserved meat (e.g. sticky rice wrapped in lotus leaf, turnip cake, taro cake), Jinhua ham
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food items with caffeine or sweeteners⁵ 	Food items made with coffee or tea (e.g. coffee-flavoured bakery products, boiled egg in tea), food items made with ready-made sauces that contain sweeteners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drinks in the category of ‘Snacks to Choose Less’^{5 6} 	Soft drinks, fruit-flavoured drinks, fruit juices with added sugar, yoghurt drinks, probiotic drinks, tetra-packed drinks (e.g. lemon tea, chrysanthemum tea, Chinese herbal tea), sports drinks, green tea, energy drinks, sugar-free soft drinks

- Since students have a high calcium need for their growth and development, lunch suppliers are encouraged to use calcium-rich ingredients more. However, suitable calcium-rich ingredients for preparing lunch boxes are limited. Parents should therefore provide calcium-rich food in other main meals or as snacks.
- It refers to rice and noodles prepared and cooked with more than 2 teaspoons of fat or oil per serving per person.
- Chicken feet (both non-fried and deep-fried) is categorised as ‘Strongly Discouraged Food Items’ due to its high fat content.

- It is recommended that sauce or gravy with high fat, salt or sugar content should be served sparingly and separately from grains.
- Food items and drinks containing caffeine or sweeteners are not recommended for primary school students.
- For drinks examples of ‘Snacks to Choose Less’, please refer to *Nutritional Guidelines on Snacks for Students*.